

author. It is distinguished by its very long and thick coat, the hairs of which are grey at their base and silvery yellow towards the point; the latter colour predominates on the limbs, the belly, and the sides of the face, and is mingled with a very brilliant red tinge on the frontal region. The upper margin of the nostrils is much developed, forming a true nose.

Two species of *Insectivora* form the types of new genera. One of these seems to be a transition form between the Desmans and the Shrews; like the former it has the posterior feet dilated into natatory pallets, and its tail is long and laterally compressed; but its snout is short, and its teeth resemble those of *Sorex*. It has sixteen teeth in the upper and twelve in the lower jaw. To this animal the author gives the name of *Nectogale elegans*. The second form is nearly allied to the Shrews, but is distinguished by having scaly feet and a tail so short as to be concealed by the hairs; it has only twenty-four teeth, twelve above and twelve below. For this genus the author proposes the name of *Anourosorex*. A mole, named *Talpa longirostris*, is characterized by its very elongated muzzle, which gives it a certain resemblance to the Japanese *T. moogura*. The latter has only six inferior incisors; the new Thibetan species has eight.

The most interesting animal is one called by the Abbé David *Ursus melanoleucus*. The author states that it is not a bear, although resembling one in its external appearance, but in its osteological and dentary characters it approaches the Pandas (*Ailurus*) and Raccoons. It forms a new genus, for which the name of *Ailuropoda* is proposed. The author also notices a fine Flying Squirrel, which has the head and breast covered with a mixture of bright-red and white hairs. He names it *Pteromys alborufus*.—*Comptes Rendus*, February 14, 1870, tome lxx. pp. 341-342.

*On the Transformation of the Nests of the House-Martin* (*Hirundo urbica*, Linn.). By M. A. POUCHET.

M. Pouchet has noticed a change in the design of the nests of the common House-Martin, which he says has been effected within the last forty years, and the observation of which leads him to think that the notion of the exact persistence of the same mode of nest-building is by no means so certain as has generally been supposed. He refers to several instances in which we may presume that a change took place on the birds of certain species quitting the open country and coming to take up their abode among human habitations.

With regard to the House-Martin, M. Pouchet states that, having procured some nests in order to draw them, he was surprised to find that they differed considerably from those which he had collected forty years ago, and which are still preserved in the Museum at Rouen. A reference to published figures of the Martin's nest furnished further evidence of the same kind.

The nests of the older form are hollow quarters of hemispheres applied by three sections to the embrasures of windows or to the

surface of buildings, and having a *very small circular opening*, two or three centimetres in diameter, for the entrance and exit of the birds. The new nests, on the contrary, represent the quarter of a hollow hemiovoid, having its poles much elongated, and its three sections adhering to the walls of buildings, except above, where the entrance is formed; and this entrance, instead of being a mere rounded hole, *is a long transverse fissure* bounded below by a depression of the margin of the nest, and above by a projection of the building to which the nest is attached. This aperture is nine or ten centimetres in length, whilst its gape is only two centimetres.

M. Pouchet regards this alteration in the form of the nest as not only a change, but an improvement. The greater extent of the floor gives more room for the movements of the little family, the members of which will be less heaped upon one another. The long narrow aperture enables the young birds to put out their heads so as to breathe the fresh air and contemplate the world around them, whilst the access of the parent birds to the nest without displacing the young ones is rendered far more easy, and the interior of the nest is better protected from the weather.

His attention having been called to this change in the structure of the Martins' nests, M. Pouchet set to work to examine with a glass the nests in position in various parts of Rouen. He found that upon the old churches of the centre of the town many of the nests presented the old construction, being either old nests repaired and made fit for use, or the work of conservative architects who still stuck to the old plan: the former appeared to M. Pouchet to be the most probable supposition. Mixed with these were other nests of the new form. Along the new streets of Rouen, on the other hand, all the nests were built after the new fashion.—*Comptes Rendus*, March 7, 1870, tome lxx. pp. 492-496.

*Character of a new Species of Crossoptilon.*

By the Abbé ARMAND DAVID.

M. Milne-Edwards has communicated to the Academy of Sciences the following diagnosis of a *Crossoptilon*, extracted from a letter of M. A. David, dated Sse-Tchuan, December 18, 1869. The species is named *C. cærulescens*:—

"Same dimensions and form as *C. auritum*; feet red; bill light red, marked with brown towards the tip; iris reddish nut-brown; head like that of the species from Pekin, with the elongated feathers of the ears a little more developed; general colour of the plumage a uniform and very fine *dark-bluish slate-colour*, except that the ends of the large feathers of the tail are black and shining, with green and violet reflections; the three or four small lateral feathers are white at their basal portion or entirely, according to age; the large quill-feathers of the wings also are olive-coloured; and the black velvety feathers of the top of the head are separated from the slate-coloured feathers of the neck by a small white streak."—*Comptes Rendus*, March 7, 1870, tome lxx. p. 538.